

The *Victorian Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy Stage 2* has three priority areas for action: mental health and wellbeing, sexual and reproductive health and social connectedness. This report describes progress on initiatives in the *2007 –2008 Action plan*.

The sixty five initiatives range from statewide projects to local grass roots/self help actions operating in a variety of settings throughout 2007 and 2008<sup>1</sup>.

Demonstrated benefits to women's health and wellbeing include:

- Improved physical, social and emotional health and wellbeing
- Improved responsiveness of services to women's needs
- Safer and more secure environments
- Stronger community connections
- Greater capacity to support family members
- More employment and training opportunities
- Greater capacity to self care and seek support for depression and anxiety
- More informed sexual health choices.

Key successes are detailed in the following section, and the progress of all initiatives is summarised from page 5.

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<sup>1</sup> One initiative (*Signposts for Building Better Behavior*) transferred to Department of Education and Early Childhood Development following machinery of government changes in August 2007.

## KEY SUCCESSES

### Priority Action Area 1: Mental Health and Wellbeing

#### Initiatives 1.1 and 1.2: Safety for women in inpatient units

The Mental Health Branch has funded two initiatives to address women's sense of security and safety in inpatient units. The work acknowledges that the experience of safety is multidimensional. It encompasses physical, environmental and psychological dimensions, with appropriate treatment delivered in environments experienced as safe by consumers, their families, carers and staff.

The *Gender sensitivity and safety in adult acute mental health inpatient units* project has conducted site visits, literature and policy review and interviews with key stakeholders to identify areas for future development. Practice guidelines are a likely outcome over the coming year.

Once off funding (\$20,000) provided through the *Inpatient Environmental Improvement Grants* has seen all Mental Health Inpatient Services consult with consumers and plan measures to improve inpatient units to address some of women's safety and security concerns. This initiative has provided a tangible improvement to the safety of inpatient environments for women throughout the state. Service activity has included the review of internal policies and practices, minor refurbishing works and the establishment of a women's room in an inpatient unit.

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#### Initiative 1.31: Say No to Family Violence Community Awareness Program

Gippsland Women's Health Service (GWHS) has developed this project with the Sale City Football Netball Club to raise awareness of, and improve local responses to, family violence. The model developed by the AFL and VicHealth (Respect and Responsibility program) makes use of the valuable role of sporting clubs in rural communities. The project has improved awareness while also taking steps to provide a supportive environment for those witnessing or experiencing violence. Activities have included:

- 'Say No to Family Violence' message displayed on uniforms and signs around the club
- Co-facilitation of family violence awareness sessions with the U18s football players by Relationships Australia and Central Gippsland Health Service.
- Delivery of information sessions by GWHS to netball and football players focused on raising awareness of the impact of abuse and how to support someone affected by violence. Sessions with male players also included how to talk to a mate about his use of violence.
- *Duty of Care* sessions to the Board, Junior and Senior Committees by Child Wise, a child protection charity working to prevent child abuse. As a result GWHS will continue to support the club in the development of appropriate policies related to family violence.
- Resources located within the club rooms advising of local and regional supports and networks for the whole of club community.

Through the creation of a supportive environment, there has been an increase in netballer registrations for the 2008 year and a commitment by the club to improve policy and practice. Sale City Football Netball Club initiated contact with the *Good Sport* program for 2008 season as a result of understanding the direct impact of attitudes towards alcohol and violence.

### **Initiative 1.33: Emotional Strength Building Program**

Women's Health Loddon Mallee and St Luke's run this 10 session program twice a year in Bendigo and Ouyen. Using a strengths-based approach that promotes coping and resilience, the program aims to build knowledge about the physiological, psychological and social factors contributing to depression and anxiety.

The program has attracted 10 women per program with a waiting list for future programs. Women attending the sessions report:

- greater confidence regarding involvement in community activities
- friendships enduring past the life of the program
- support from other group participants, reducing social isolation
- awareness of rights and greater assertiveness to assert their rights in their personal lives.

Since a positive evaluation by the University of Western Sydney, Women's Health Loddon Mallee and St Luke's are considering adapting the program for drought affected areas.

## **Priority Action Area 2: Sexual and Reproductive Health**

### **Initiative 2.15: Girls Talk – Guys Talk**

Women's Health West has coordinated a whole school program focused on young women's sexual and reproductive health. From the outset, teachers, parents, students and local agencies identified teenage motherhood as a prominent issue for Laverton Secondary College. It was apparent during focus groups that Year 9 boys and girls had vastly different views on the subject; the boys had little interest in the topic whereas the girls viewed themselves as supportive of their friends with babies and saw having the baby as the only "right" option for a pregnant teenager. Whole school interventions have included:

- Year 9 student assessment of school sexual and reproductive health issues
- establishment of an ongoing student working group of 18 members
- development and support of student mentors and peer educators
- development of the Year 9 sex education course which recognised and addressed gender differences
- curriculum and policy development, including equal opportunity which will assist the school in its planning for future years.
- train the trainer and sex education package for teachers
- education and information for parents, including a student performance "Should I or Shouldn't I?".

Girls Talk- Guys Talk is currently undergoing its final stages. This includes:

- embedding sex education into the curriculum
- professional development to support teachers to be comfortable co-delivering sexual and reproductive health training
- school policy review and development, based on the surveys and focus groups
- linking *Girls Talk – Guys Talk* with Hobson's Bay Mentoring Program
- increasing involvement of Hobson's Bay Youth Services with Laverton Secondary College
- a project evaluation report.

### Priority Action Area 3: Social Connectedness

#### Initiative 3.1 The Public Tenant Employment Program

The aim of the Public Tenant Employment Program (PTEP) is to create employment and training opportunities for people living in public housing. There are 73,000 working age Victorians in public housing, with only 10% employed full time compared to close to 40% in the general population. This is of concern given the well documented link between employment and good health and well being. 56% of public tenants are women.

The initial program brief was to create employment through the contracts generated by the Housing and Community Building Division. The nature of the work in this industry (construction, cleaning and maintenance) meant that the majority of positions were being filled by men, despite strong encouragement for women to apply for these roles. Women made up only 6% of tenants employed through the program at this time.

PTEP approached the DHS program areas responsible for Home and Community Care, Aged Care and Disability Services. These are industries employing a high proportion of women and it was hoped that more women would be attracted to work in these fields. The proportion of women employed in the program has risen from 6% while the program was restricted to employment in housing to 30% currently.

The provision of training is a critical next phase in the pathway to employment for disadvantaged and socially isolated people. The PTEP program has begun providing nationally accredited, pre vocational training for public tenants and the aim is to ensure that number of women have access this opportunity proportional to their representation in the public tenant population. To date 70 women have accessed nationally accredited, pre vocational training courses. This will ensure the delivery of better opportunities for employment outcomes, in turn improving health and wellbeing for women.

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#### Initiative 3.2 Count Us In!

The Count Us In! initiative has provided funding to 16 community based agencies and health services to promote social inclusion for people living in aged care facilities. The majority of aged care residents are women, given women are statistically more likely to live longer than men and outlive their partners, leaving them without a resident carer.

Initial findings indicate social inclusion activities have improved older people's health and wellbeing. Relationships have been developed with volunteers, local clubs, sporting groups, students at primary and secondary schools and leaders of community organisations. Social inclusion has seen people become more enthusiastic, happy, active and forward looking, contributing to their self esteem and confidence.

## Priority Action Area 1: Mental Health and Wellbeing

### **Initiative 1.1: Gender sensitivity and safety in adult acute mental health inpatient units**

To investigate issues related to gender sensitivity and safety in adult acute inpatient units.

#### **Progress and Achievements:**

Literature and policy reviews, interviews with key stakeholders and inpatient service visit audits have been completed. Approaching completion of written report with recommendations to senior management in the Mental Health and Drugs Division. See also Key successes.

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### **Initiative 1.2: Inpatient Environmental Improvement Grants**

Once off funding supports environmental alterations to adult acute inpatient units. These will enhance safety and contribute to the sense of security women consumers of mental health services need.

#### **Progress and Achievements:**

All Mental Health Inpatient Services have consulted consumers and utilised the \$20,000 in grants to improve inpatient units to address some of the safety and security concerns of women. See also Key successes.

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### **Initiative 1.3: Postnatal Depression: Mercy Hospital for Women**

To expand obstetric liaison and outpatient services for those women at high risk for pregnancy complications and psychiatric disorder.

#### **Progress and Achievements:**

Psychiatric liaison service to the Neonatal Intensive Care Nursery and Special Care Unit includes attendance at weekly ward rounds. Supervision support in place for staff of the Transitions Clinic.

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### **Initiative 1.4: Postnatal Depression: Mother/Baby mental health services**

To support maternal and child health (MCH) services to work with mothers

with postnatal depression (PND), their infants and families.

#### **Progress and Achievements:**

Training programs for MCH in varying stages of preparation and commencement. MCH service staff have developed direct relationships with specialist mental health Mother/Baby services staff and gained increased access to training and support to work with women experiencing PND.

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### **Initiative 1.5: Royal Women's Hospital, Mental Health Consultation and Liaison**

To expand consultation and liaison beyond inpatient maternity services to include service provision to high risk groups.

#### **Progress and Achievements:**

An after hours psychiatry consultation service has been established with a consultant "on call" to provide advice and support to RWH staff 7 days a week. A consultant psychiatrist and registrar are now part of the Women's Alcohol and Drug Service multi disciplinary team.

A consultant psychiatrist now attends the "Young Mums" Clinic providing assessments, management of referred patients and secondary consultation to other health professionals involved in the young women's care.

Formal psychiatric support to the Aboriginal Women's Health Business Unit began in February 2007 with a focus on Aboriginal women presenting to the RWH with acute psychiatric issues.

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### **Initiative 1.6: Southern Health Eating Disorders Day Program Pilot**

To improve responses to young people with eating disorders.

#### **Progress and Achievements:**

This specialised eating disorders day program is operating well, handling enquiries and admitting clients. A formal review of the model's effectiveness will

be undertaken in the second half of 2008.

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**Initiative 1.7: Families Where a Parent Has a Mental Illness (FaPMI) – a service development strategy**

To reduce the impact of parental mental illness on all family members through timely, coordinated, preventative and supportive action.

**Progress and Achievements:**

The Bouverie Centre has been funded to lead and coordinate the strategy's implementation and has appointed a Statewide Coordinator to undertake this work. Seven half time coordinators have been appointed in area mental health services across the state (5 rural & 2 metro).

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**Initiative 1.8: Community Health Counselling quality initiatives**

To improve the quality of counselling in community health settings through the provision of professional development opportunities to practitioners.

**Progress and Achievements:**

The Bouverie Centre has completed *Family therapy skills training* attended by 187 counselling practitioners from 67 Community Health Services (CHS) and 8 one day refresher courses for experienced family therapists. Also 68 senior counselling practitioners received training to provide 'in house' clinical supervision to counselling practitioners in community health.

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**Initiative 1.9: Refugee Health Nurse Program**

To provide timely access to a range of primary health services for newly arrived refugees settling in Victoria.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Operates across 9 CHS across Victoria. The evaluation of the first year of the model has provided clear evidence of the positive impact of the initiative, providing newly arrived refugee women and their families with culturally appropriate health services.

**Initiative 1.10: Supporting Care Relationships for Older Victorians**

To improve recognition of and support for care relationships for older Victorians through policy, service development and delivery.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Carers Victoria has been funded over four years for the development and delivery of carer capacity education and training programs and support for the networking of carers in local carer groups.

*Well for Life for People in Care Relationships* projects in Hume, Southern Metro, Barwon South Western, Eastern Metro and North and West Metro Regions have resulted in isolated carers participating in group nutritional and activity programs.

Funding has been provided to hospitals to develop carer friendly hospital environments.

The *Support for Carers Program* providing respite and support to older carers and the carers of older people has grown to \$13.4m recurrent funding.

A guide to living at home, and navigating and accessing services for older Victorians and their carers is currently being finalised.

A review of HACC social support and respite has begun to examine how well carer needs are met, and care relationships supported.

A Carers Charter is being developed recognising, respecting and supporting people in care relationships, and promoting their participation in care planning and management.

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**Initiative 1.11: Preventing Elder Abuse guide**

A new guide will provide up to date guidance to staff in health, community and residential aged care services to more confidently address suspected and substantiated incidents of abuse.

**Progress and Achievements:**

The new guideline *With Respect to Age 2008* is due for release in June 2008.

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**Initiative 1.12: Signposts for Building Better Behaviour**

Initiative transferred to Department of Education and Early Childhood Development following machinery of government changes in August 2007.

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**Initiative 1.13: Health Promotion Priorities: Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Develop an Action Plan (as part of the implementation of statewide health promotion priorities for 2007-2012 to improve overall health and reduce health inequalities) with a focus on mental health and wellbeing.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Mental health promotion is a strategic direction in the broader Victorian Mental Health Reform program.

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**Initiative 1.14: Healthy Babies Healthy Pregnancies**

To develop the *Healthy Babies Healthy Pregnancies* practical resource kit, for health workers in Aboriginal settings. The resource emphasises issues related to alcohol misuse/abuse. This program involves a whole of community approach to the development of healthy babies.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Resource kit completed. Regional launches, training sessions completed in Melbourne, Geelong and Bairnsdale.

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**Initiative 1.15: Parent Support Program**

To improve the confidence of parents of drug users, and also to reduce parental stress, anxiety and guilt associated with a family member using drugs.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Continuing to provide parents with skills to help cope with their children's substance use.

**Initiative 1.16: Family Counselling (Drug and Alcohol) program**

To provide assistance, counselling and support to families with a family member affected by substance abuse. This assists to promote, maintain and strengthen their independence and wellbeing, as well as strengthen their capacity to support the family member affected by substance abuse.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Continuing to improve women's and families' capacity to support family members who use alcohol and other drugs.

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**Initiative 1.17: New Life Program (previously Women for Sobriety)**

To support a self help group for women experiencing difficulties with alcohol and drug dependency. The program will focus on the underlying health and wellbeing issues contributing to alcohol and drug use.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Continuing to support women to abstain from alcohol and drugs, resulting in improved physical, social and emotional well being.

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**Initiative 1.18: Antenatal and Postnatal Support Services: Women's Alcohol and Drug Service, Royal Women's Hospital**

To provide support and assistance for pregnant women with problematic drug and alcohol use.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Continuing to provide clinical services and advocacy for women requiring intensive antenatal care.

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**Initiative 1.19: Women's Alcohol and Drug Supported Accommodation**

To help women recover and reintegrate into community living through supported accommodation services providing a drug free supportive environment.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Continuing to provide a stable residential environment for women to be drug free.

**Initiative 1.20: Therapeutic Communities for Women - Salvation Army/Bridgehaven**

To provide a stable residential environment for women (and their children), who are seeking to overcome alcohol and other drug dependencies.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Continuing to provide a therapeutic community residential service for women seeking to address their drug use.

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**Initiative 1.21: Therapeutic Communities for Women - Odyssey**

To provide extra support to parents overcoming their addiction whilst simultaneously looking after dependent children.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Women are maintaining relationships with their children and partners whilst learning new skills in parenting and living without the use of substances.

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**Initiative 1.22: Odyssey and Women Offenders Project**

To assist women in prison or in the community awaiting a court hearing, who are seeking a residential drug rehabilitation program.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Referral process between courts and Odyssey Victoria developed and implemented.

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**Initiative 1.23: Pandora's Box**

To ensure that women with a disability who experience family violence have increased access to appropriate services.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Access audits of family violence services have commenced and will be completed by June 2008. Women's Health Goulburn North East have completed and updated the resource directory.

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**Initiative 1.24: Family Violence Learning Program**

To establish a cross program and sectoral learning program.

This will provide workers in both the disability and family violence sectors with the skills to support women with a disability experiencing family violence.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Learning needs have been identified for the development of the learning program. Phase 1 rollout of the learning program has commenced in two pilot regions (Hume & Southern Metropolitan region). Initial evaluation of the program will commence in June 2008.

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**Initiative 1.25: Victorian Breast Prosthesis Subsidy Program**

To provide a funding subsidy for eligible women who have had breast surgery.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Consumer satisfaction surveys undertaken by the service provider Southern Health indicate a high level of complete satisfaction with the program (88%). Since its establishment the program has reduced waiting times for prostheses, streamlined application and funding processes and acted as a resource for information provision regarding prosthesis and prosthesis subsidies.

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**Initiative 1.26: Ready Set Baby Program**

To support service providers in Shire of Yarra Ranges in consulting with young pregnant and socially isolated women to identify issues and develop an antenatal resource for first time parents.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Eastern Health and Connections, a support agency for families and children, are currently adapting the Ready, Set Baby Manual for at risk groups. They plan to pilot the training mid 2008.

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**Initiative 1.27: Morphed**

To provide rural women experiencing disadvantage due to geographic, social, economic or personal circumstances with the opportunity for social inclusion through participation in high quality community arts activities and public performance.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Over 140 participants from diverse communities were involved in workshops and performances, including production, scriptwriting, set making, acting and performing music. 1,500 people attended the community theatre performances and 1,000 secondary school students attended three schools performances. The project has increased social connectedness for participants, evidenced by weekly social group meetings, and a number of participants have joined local theatre groups. A project evaluation commenced in April 2008.

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**Initiative 1.28: Promoting Positive Body Image**

To develop and deliver best practice body image sessions to year 7-9 girls in secondary schools across the South West sub region.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Body image sessions provided to schoolgirls in years 7-9. Two women's health workers have also attended *Bodythink* professional development training to run workshops in schools on request. Completion and launch of South West eating disorders service mapping.

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**Initiative 1.29: Mothers of Casey Alliance (MOCA)**

To improve the mental health of mothers living in the City of Casey who may be at risk of post natal depression (PND).

**Progress and Achievements:**

Advocacy work undertaken by MOCA has resulted in Cardinia Casey Community Health Service developing a PND self help group. MOCA has provided input and consultancy into the City of Casey Playground Strategy Review. 320 people attended the 2007 *Casey Greatest Pram Stroll* organised by MOCA and the City of Casey.

**Initiative 1.30: Peer Education, Gender and the Promotion of Mental Health through Freedom from Violence**

To evaluate the Cardinia Casey Community *Health Making Changes* and *See Saw* programs.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Evaluation completed and available on request from Cardinia Casey Community Health Service. Peer education was established as an effective mechanism for engaging and empowering women. Some peer educators identified long term benefits of participating including a commitment to academic study, undertaking paid employment and engaging in new relationships.

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**Initiative 1.32: Family Violence School Based Project**

To build the capacity of staff within East Gippsland secondary schools to respond effectively to the issue of family violence.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Meetings with school leadership and welfare staff have occurred with schools in Far East Gippsland, East Gippsland, Wellington and Latrobe. School welfare staff and other community based specialist services now work more closely. Gippsland Women's Health Service has developed a professional development package for secondary school. One school has progressed to review of policy/procedure relating to disclosures of violence.

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**Initiative 1.34: Integrated Family Violence**

To undertake a new coordinated approach to addressing family violence.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Over 70 organisations, through 20 partnerships across Victoria, delivering a suite of family violence support services, women's and children's counselling and men's behaviour change programs.

In February 2008 the Children Youth & Family Services Division launched *Practice guidelines: Women & children's family violence counseling and support*

*programs.* These standards will guide quality practice and continuous improvement to ensure women and children receive the best support possible to rebuild and recover from the impact of family violence.

Victoria received an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant in 2007 to evaluate the family violence reforms in Victoria.

A Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Manual was launched in July 2007. Training around the use of the manual is planned to roll out across the state from June 2008.

## Priority Action Area 2: Sexual and Reproductive Health

### **Initiative 2.1: The new Royal Women's Hospital Project**

To further enhance the level of care and support provided by the Royal Women's Hospital.

#### **Progress and Achievements:**

The relocation to the new Royal Women's Hospital site is on schedule for June 2008. The ward design for the new hospital provides for 17 birth rooms, 3 assessment rooms and a small increase in the total number of maternity beds including a swing ward which can flex to provide either gynaecology beds or overflow antenatal beds. The design of the new hospital will offer flexibility to increase maternity or other clinical services in response to future changes in demand.

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### **Initiative 2.2: "You never know who you'll meet": Youth Safe Sex Media and Marketing Campaign"**

To raise awareness of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and promote safe sex through condom use by 18-25 year olds.

#### **Progress and Achievements:**

The campaign, a component of the Victorian Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategy 2006-2009, ran from June–December 2007. It received broad exposure in; cinema, radio and print media, 243 city cafes, 179 regional venues, 17 TAFES and Universities. Initial feedback has shown a high recall rate and a positive change in frequency of condom use among young people.

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### **Initiative 2.3: Chlamydia Prevalence and Testing Research Pilot Project**

To establish and deliver a pilot opportunistic testing program for high risk women (defined as those sexually active and aged between 16 to 24 years) attending general practitioners and health care agencies.

#### **Progress and Achievements:**

Twelve primary health care services have been recruited to undertake a trial

study from May–November 2008, which seeks to:

- determine the prevalence of chlamydia among women screened
- establish whether a \$5 reimbursement to GPs will increase chlamydia testing
- increase provider awareness of chlamydia infection.

The findings will identify opportunities for implementing a targeted opportunistic screening program for chlamydia in the future.

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### **Initiative 2.4: Health Promotion priorities: Sexual and Reproductive Health**

Develop an Action Plan focusing on sexual and reproductive health, as part of the implementation of statewide health promotion priorities for 2007–2012 to improve overall health and reduce health inequalities.

#### **Progress and Achievements:**

A departmental Working Group has been established to oversee the development of a sexual and reproductive health promotion framework and practitioner resources.

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### **Initiative 2.5: Promoting primary maternity services**

To ensure high quality birthing services which make the best use of the complementary skills of midwives, general practitioners and obstetricians.

#### **Progress and Achievements:**

Caseload midwifery model of care is being implemented at the Royal Women's Hospital, Barwon Health and soon at Sunshine Hospital.

Funds have been allocated under the Rural Maternity Initiative (RMI) to continue to enhance maternity care in rural areas. The RMI has been reported as having very positive impacts on rural birthing services and maternity care.

In 2008 funding of \$490,000 has been provided for 7 advanced rural specialist training posts, \$350,000 for 6 GP Procedural Obstetrics posts and an extra \$30,000 for another 3 GP extended skills posts.

Workforce initiatives include nursing scholarships and education programs including 15 midwifery scholarships, the Victorian Maternity Education Program to be offered across 11 sites in 2008, and a midwifery refresher course developed and promoted.

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**Initiative 2.6: Koori Maternity Program**

To improve birthing experiences and birthing outcomes for Aboriginal women in Victoria.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Seven services have each employed a midwife and Aboriginal maternity health worker to provide a range of clinical, linkage, advocacy and health promotion services on site and through outreach service provision. Three services offer a model in which an Aboriginal health worker works with other clinical staff at the Aboriginal Community Controlled organisation and/or the local hospital.

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**Initiative 2.7: Cervical Screening Program – Implementation of the National Health and Medical Research Council Guidelines**

To ensure Victorian women who have an abnormality detected through cervical screening (Pap smear) are managed according to best practice guidelines.

**Progress and Achievements:**

In February 2008 Victorian Cytology Register (VCS) entered a contract with the Commonwealth Government's Department of Health and Ageing to establish and manage the National HPV Program Register. VCS in conjunction with PapScreen Victoria (PSV) organised educational updates via the Divisions of GP to prepare providers. Nineteen updates have been delivered to 675 GPs, Nurse Practitioners, Practice Managers and council staff involved in HPV

vaccinations. PSV also conducted a statewide media campaign, including selected multicultural and Aboriginal media to remind women about the need for regular Pap smears, notwithstanding the new cervical cancer vaccine.

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**Initiative 2.8: Human Papilloma Virus Immunisation Program**

To implement an immunisation against Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) program for Victorian girls and young women.

**Progress and Achievements:**

70% of girls in Years 7, 10, 11 and 12 have completed the full course of three doses of the HPV vaccine. The 2008 school based program for years 7, 9 and 10 is underway. Women aged 18-26 years are accessing the vaccine through GPs and other primary care providers. The vaccine will greatly reduce the number of cervical abnormalities detected on Pap smears, meaning less medical intervention in investigating these abnormalities.

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**Initiative 2.9: Statewide Pregnancy Advisory Service**

To investigate existing service provision and best practice for pregnancy advisory services and develop a model applicable to Victoria.

**Progress and Achievements:**

A draft research report was submitted by Deakin University in March 2008. Following finalisation of the report, the results will be considered for future policy/program development.

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**Initiative 2.10: Family and Reproductive Rights Education Program realignment**

To improve alignment between the principles, aims and objectives of the Family and Reproductive Rights Education Program (FARREP) and the *Refugee Health and Wellbeing Action Plan*.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Through training, consultation with existing FARREP workers and agencies, development of department program guidelines and generic job descriptions,

the program has aligned more closely with the department's *Refugee Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2005-2008*. FARREP education resources have been updated and consolidated to ensure consistency of messages about FGM and sexual and reproductive health of affected women and girls. Key health promotion target groups have been identified to ensure that approaches effectively meet the needs of girls, women, men and religious leaders for the prevention of FGM.

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**Initiative 2.11: The Women's Health East learning and development calendar**

To improve 'health literacy' around sexual health and mental health promotion for service providers in the Eastern Metropolitan Region.

**Progress and Achievements:**

The majority of Eastern Metropolitan Region community health services have completed gender training by Women's Health East and are now undertaking planning incorporating a gender lens.

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**Initiative 2.12: Sexual Health Strategy – Knox Community Health Service**

To enhance the sexual health outcomes for young people in the City of Knox.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Ongoing strategy as part of 3 year health promotion capacity building plan. Impact in terms of improvements for women to be assessed.

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**Initiative 2.13: Respect Protect Connect Program**

To provide young women with information about and skills to identify violence, and encourage them to be proactive in gaining help and support if they were facing a situation involving domestic violence.

**Progress and Achievements:**

This ongoing initiative by Women's Health in the South East continues to have a high demand from secondary schools. An anti violence workshop in an Islamic school with 40 participants,

illustrates the increasing demand from faith-based schools for this program. Evaluation of the program has indicated that it is effective in altering young women's beliefs about violence and their ability to seek further information when confronted with bullying, harassment and violence.

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**Initiative 2.14: Women's Talk**

To provide information to women with disabilities to increase their knowledge and awareness of sexual and reproductive health issues.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Two Central Bayside Community Health Service (CBCHS) women's health nurse pap test providers have undertaken specialised training to further develop their skills and knowledge in working with women with disabilities. Resources to increase knowledge and awareness regarding sexual and reproductive health issues have been developed, piloted and disseminated to supported residential services (SRS). CBCHS have scheduled follow up consultations with the women involved for late 2008.

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**Initiative 2.15: Girls Talk- Guys Talk**

To develop a whole school program focused on young women's sexual and reproductive health.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Nearing the completion of its first year, the program has successfully worked in partnership with students, school staff, local agencies and parents to encourage young women to make more informed choices about their sexual health. An evaluation of *Girls Talk- Guys Talk* is currently underway. See also Key successes

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**Initiative 2.16: Kids Wanna Know**

To educate young girls and their mothers about puberty, menstruation and specific body changes.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Conducted in two primary schools in the Ouyen area. Feedback from girls and

mothers reported improved learnings, communication and relationships. Mothers have provided parental peer support.

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**Initiative 2.17: *Girls in a Whirl***

To educate girls and mothers about body changes and to encourage and enhance better communication, self esteem and relationships.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Conducted in two community settings in Ouyen and Manangatang in 2008. Feedback from participants reports improved communication and relationships between girls and workers with girls feeling comfortable to seek sexual health information and referral from health workers.

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**Initiative 2.18: *Getting Chlamydia on the Radar***

To develop partnerships and programs focussing on the prevention of and screening for chlamydia.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Two young women's networks established in Horsham and Ballarat. Chlamydia information and marketing material has been produced in both regions, with young women actively involved in peer education, website development and information delivery.

### Priority Action Area 3: Social Connectedness

#### **Initiative 3.1 The Public Tenant Employment Program**

To create employment and training opportunities for women living in public housing.

##### **Progress and Achievements:**

Seventy women have been employed in the program since December 2007. Of these, 34% are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, 21% are youth (under 25), 28% are mature (45+) and 6% are Aboriginal. See also Key successes.

#### **Initiative 3.2 Count Us In!**

To promote social inclusion of people living in residential aged care.

##### **Progress and Achievements:**

Funding has been provided to 16 community based agencies and health services to promote social inclusion for people living in residential aged care. A forum in May 2008 will share learnings and outcomes of projects, reflect on the success, challenges and highlights experienced by all participants and explore future directions and integration of the Count Us In! social inclusion principles. A report documenting all project achievements and outcomes will be available in late 2008. See also Key Successes.

#### **Initiative 3.3 The Turkish Women's Voice Group**

To act as a support network, build confidence and empower Turkish women to actively participate in the community through training and employment opportunities.

##### **Progress and Achievements:**

Ten members have completed a Food Safety Handling course and have joined the catering committee. Eight members have participated in Governance and Event Management training. Twenty women participated in a wellbeing day out to enhance their assertiveness, build self esteem and confidence. Women are actively involved in community events held by local council and agencies.

The group are doing research into the use of drugs amongst Turkish youth, educating parents in understanding the effects of drugs and where they can get assistance.

#### **Initiative 3.4 Young Parents Access Program**

To enable young women who are parents to continue or return to education.

##### **Progress and Achievements:**

In 2007 the Corio Bay Senior College 'Hub' initiative was Highly Commended by the Best Start Early Years Award program. The initiative co-locates integrated formal and informal education, affordable childcare, outreach health and support services and recreational activities.

Childcare is provided onsite in a registered 43 place, purpose built centre and is utilised by student parents and the general community. The Young Parents Access Program Support Worker position is now fully funded by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, for all schools with access to an onsite childcare facility.

#### **Initiative 3.5 Seymour Neighbourhood Renewal redevelopment and development of local parks**

To develop more appropriate and family friendly parks and recreation facilities in partnership with Neighbourhood Renewal residents.

##### **Progress and Achievements:**

Two parks have been totally refurbished and replaced with new play equipment, secure fencing, shade areas and barbeques. The community were actively engaged in the planning and implementation of the upgrades and have taken ownership of the new environments. Women now meet in the parks as they have become safe and friendly environments. This has increased the level of activity and participation in the community.

**Initiative 3.6 Islamic Women's Project**

To develop an understanding of health promotion practices which meet the needs of Islamic women.

**Progress and Achievements:**

A final report, consisting of a demographic analysis of Muslim women in Victoria and a literature review identifying issues such as identity, faith, gender, health belief models and access to health services, is due June 2008.

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**Initiative 3.7 Bail Support Program - Better Pathways Housing Initiative for Women**

To better support Aboriginal women at risk of offending or re-offending through meeting their need for stable housing.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Cross agency collaboration has provided holistic responses to clients' needs and immediacy of intervention and ongoing support. Gender responsiveness has targeted a range of prevention, early intervention, diversion, rehabilitation and transitional support programs. Includes Aboriginal women in Hume and Loddon Mallee regions.

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**Initiative 3.8 Mums in Bayswater - Knox Community Health Service**

To enhance the social connectedness of Bayswater mothers parenting in difficult circumstances.

**Progress and Achievements:**

A peer to peer audit is underway examining infrastructure, safety, open space, connectivity of open spaces and support needed to increase the physical activity of mums parenting in difficult circumstances.

A range of community events have been held to inform Knox Council's planning around infrastructure needs to support increased physical activity and inform action planning. Finalist in the Victorian Healthcare Association awards in 2007.

**Initiative 3.9 Engaging culturally and linguistically diverse communities and family violence services in Casey and Greater Dandenong**

To improve the levels of access by CALD families to family violence services.

**Progress and Achievements:**

The Southern CALD Regional Network has been established to increase awareness of family violence services that are culturally appropriate. It continues to grow and has approximately 50 participants.

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**Initiative 3.10 Afghani Women's Group**

To enable Afghani women to engage with their local community, organise their own activities, and participate in regular exercise.

**Progress and Achievements:**

Established in 1992, the Frankston Afghani Women's Group is now classified as a self help group which requires minimal support from Women's Health in the South East. Members of the group have indicated an increase in confidence and the ability to advocate on their own behalf.

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**Initiative 3.11 Talking Realities Peer Education Program**

To increase awareness about the relationship between teenage parenting and social connectedness for young women attending secondary schools in the Bayside and Kingston areas.

**Progress and Achievements:**

In 2007, the program was delivered in 9 secondary schools across the Bayside and Kingston catchment area and to Victorian Certificate Applied Learning students at Holmesglen TAFE.

### **Initiative 3.12      Girlsational**

To engage young women in the City of Casey in a program to promote their self esteem.

#### **Progress and Achievements:**

This ongoing initiative has actively engaged 6 young women per week. The young women have formed positive relationships with their peers, workers and the local community. The initiative has formed a partnership with a local secondary college, allowing expansion to an additional site.

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### **Initiative 3.13      Drought assistance in rural Victoria**

To provide counselling services to support people affected by the social impacts of the drought including family breakdown, economic hardship, health, welfare and mental health issues.

#### **Progress and Achievements:**

Additional drought focused counselling positions have been created. The Bouverie Centre has provided specialist training and support to counselling practitioners to provide courses. These include empathy/communication skills for the general public to support friends & family, and networking skills for farmers to set up rural neighbourhood networks.

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### **Initiative 3.14      Women's Network Grampians**

To develop a network of women to support and increase women's participation and leadership in the Grampians Region.

#### **Progress and Achievements:**

Two Women's Network Forums have been held with 350 women in attendance. The Network provided a framework to disseminate information and build the capacity of women in the region and understand the political structures and strategic directions in their region and/or community. Ensuring that drought affected communities have access to these forums continues to be a priority.

## The Gender and diversity lens for health and human services

The **Gender and diversity lens for health and human services** is a key action of the *Victorian Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy Stage 2: 2006-2010*. It has been developed with input from a range of funded organisations, departmental staff and consumers. The lens is a practical resource for departmental policy makers and funded specialist and mainstream services to improve responsiveness to the interactions between gender, diversity and disadvantage during the planning, implementation and evaluation phases of service delivery.

The department and Women's Health Victoria have used the lens as part of five one day workshops for funded agencies about the gendered patterns of behaviour affecting the health and wellbeing of women and men.

The workshops assisted participants consider gender implications through an organisation's planning cycle and provided practical resources, a local snapshot of gendered health and human services issues, good practice and case studies to assess initiatives and plan sustainable responses.

## Practice Forums

Since its inception, the *Victorian Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy* has been committed to conducting regular forums to inform, review and focus our work. In November 2007, a *Women's Health and Chlamydia Practice Forum*, held jointly by the Public Health and Social Policy Branches of DHS, highlighted policy, research and good practice models addressing and preventing the transmission of chlamydia and its impact on women's health and wellbeing.

Other collaborative Practice Forums planned for 2008-2009 will include:

- Gender Analysis for DHS staff
- Women and Social Connectedness